



Wisconsin State Senate

**Testimony of Senator Jim Sullivan Regarding Senate Bill 195:
Adding a Member from the Wisconsin GI Forum to the Council on Veterans Programs
Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, Biotechnology, and Financial
Institutions
July 15, 2009**

Thank you, fellow committee members, for hearing my testimony on an initiative designed to bring a needed Latino perspective to work done here in Wisconsin on behalf of veterans. This bill adds one representative from the Wisconsin American GI Forum to the Wisconsin Council on Veterans Programs.

Sixty years ago, the American GI Forum was launched by Dr. Hector Garcia and other Latino veterans who had served in World War II to end the discrimination that denied them the same benefits others enjoyed as a result of their service to our nation. The American GI Forum is a national organization chartered by Congress and recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Our state's chapter of the group, the Wisconsin American GI Forum, has sought to advance the interests of Latino veterans by fighting against systemic discrimination and inequities that bureaucracy can impose on Latino veterans. Adding a member of the Wisconsin American GI Forum to the Council will help ensure Latino veterans' voices are heard and their best interests are represented.

The Council on Veterans Programs advises the Board of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) on solutions and policy alternatives relating to veterans' issues. The Council is attached to DVA and consists of members of various veterans organizations, all of whom are appointed for one-year terms.

I believe it is important that we add a member from the Wisconsin American GI Forum to the Council on Veterans Programs to help lend a new perspective to decisions and advice.

Again, thank you for hearing this testimony. I urge your support for SB 195. This bill is the same as 2007 Senate Bill 536 which passed this committee 5-0 and passed unanimously in the Senate. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions.